

Metro sees opportunity to grow Crippen Park just as BC Timber Sales re-focuses on island forests

by Louise Loik - April 5, 2018

On Thursday, March 15, MLA Jordan Sturdy, pressed the Minister of Forestry to take Bowen Island's trees off the table for industrial logging. While few, if any locals realized that the logging issue was heating up, Bob Turner, local advocate for Defend Island Forests knew almost immediately, and began to call the community to attention.

Sturdy raised the question of the future of Bowen's forests in the legislature, with Hon. Doug Donaldson, the Minister of Forestry, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO.) The answer Sturdy got was not the one he, or his constituents, were hoping to hear.

Sturdy began by stating "harvesting is not likely to happen on Bowen," adding, "If that's the case, why not pull it out of the timber harvesting land base?"

Sturdy continued to make the appeal in response to Bowen's request to get the island off the table for any future industrial logging plans. Sturdy went on to suggest that the Minister "direct Forests, Lands and BCTS personnel to not include Bowen in any future forest plans, or that the Minister or the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council could remove Bowen from the Chinook business area."

He continued, stating, "The Minister could remove Bowen from the Fraser timber supply area, the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council could designate Bowen as Crown land so that Bowen Island could be removed from the annual allowable cut of the land base, or the minister could direct the chief forester to remove Bowen from the land base used to calculate AAC (annual allowable cut.)"

Sturdy suggested that the Minister "support this type of direction and if the Minister could also provide some guidance to Bowen... in order to relieve the people of Bowen from the concern they have relative to industrial-style logging on the island."

Minister of Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Hon. Doug Donaldson, acknowledged "the sensitivity of the landscape" on Bowen, and that they, (FLNRO,) are "aware of the concerns" presented by the MLA on behalf of Bowen Island residents.

None-the-less, FLNRO and BC Timber Sales, plan to revisit the option of industrial logging Bowen. First, however, they intend to come back to Bowen, hoping to assuage any concerns about industrial logging. "What we want to do is have some time to engage in discussions with the residents and, as well, with our own BCTS personnel... to really dig down into some of the topics that residents are concerned about."

Since Timber Sales began a controversial consultation process one year ago DIF has been researching all aspects of the logging issue in order to share their findings with the community and local government.

"Apparently, BCTS has a history of strategic retreats followed later more concerted pressure to participate in logging. In this case, we hope to be prepared and ideally prevent it all together," says DIF member, John Dowler.

Just as BC Timber Sales is refocusing on Bowen, Metro Parks has simultaneously expressed interest in possibly expanding Crippen park onto crown land on the island. On March 25, Bowen council endorsed discussion with Metro Parks about the possible expansion of the park.

Dowler, says that, over the past year, DIF has created an information base with scientific and strategic information, maps, and diagrams, and communication networks. They are hoping to support council's work in island community advocacy and are seeking endorsement by council. Says Dowler, "This would help Metro engage with us to talk about park options, while decision-making power remains with Council and the community."

Council meets on April 9th.